

as he did he noticed a word scrawled on the dresser mirror in pink lipstick: SUCKER!

he drank the drink, put the glass down and saw himself in the mirror, very fat, very old.
he had no idea of what to do.

he carried the Jack Daniels back to the bed, sat down, lifted the bottle and sucked at it as the light from the boulevard came in through the blinds.
he looked out and watched the cars, passing back and forth.

HEMINGWAY'S SHADOW

I met the famous writer but he had walked into all the traps: the talk shows, the monstrous book advances: "I got a million for the last, have spent it, haven't written a page ..."

now he was making a book into a screenplay, he was in ever-debt

grinding along to keep from going under to what he owed wives, publishers, Hollywood.

he still lived well, fed well

but he was not writing very well anymore -- in fact, badly

but as a person I liked him, he was a grey little bull but

balanced -- neither bitter nor ranting nor vindictive.

his generous calmness and fine blue eyes were quite damned appealing.

he spoke well and with good sense in spite of sometimes going on so long that he chewed it to death he

was

likeable, he had simply gotten his ass trapped in so many obvious traps and there was no backing out --

just more typing and more typing and more books and more talk shows and more movies.

he was no quitter, he was doing what he could in a game where the odds had swallowed him; lesser men would have panicked and broken.

yet his charm too was part of his trap: people may like you but the typewriter is totally impartial.

we spent part of a long day and night together; what I didn't like about him was that he didn't drink very much and I have this possibly juvenile manner of judging men as -- the more they drink, the better they are.

so later on this given night we were at this stupid function together wherein, perhaps, I was getting sucked into one of his traps because there we were and it seemed to be a pityless, dumb place to be with whatever you had left of your life and I figured that the only viable thing left to do was to drink and drink and I lifted the thin-stemmed glasses and popped them down and kept motioning to the waiter for more until said waiter finally understood, watched my glass empty, to rush forward again. I bantered with the waiter, first praising him, then railing him.

as the night continued the famous writer simply sat and watched me, his eyes fixed, never leaving me. as each stupidity fell from my mouth his optics kept widening, as I emptied glass after glass after glass he just sat there looking looking as if I were some freakazoid.

at one time I told him between the rushes of the waiter: "you are making too much of this; join me instead of observing."

I think he had too much at stake, too many people not to offend.

later, past the midnight hour, I had to make the pisser. when I returned, my wife leaned to me, said, "he told me it was very nice of you not to have said anything about his writing."

the famous writer was a true class gentleman; I lifted my newly-filled glass to him and said, "we are all piss-ants."

I drank it down as those true blue eyes simply looked on and on, he was the old heavyweight champ, a darling in his class, I liked him, I truly did as the waiter rushed toward me again with the ever-bottle.

SWIVEL

I broke two chairs lately
while typing.
I was very drunk when
the last one broke.
I came crashing down at
3 a.m.
and never finished
the poem.

now I have purchased this
Lazy Boy swivel chair.
from the alleys of starvation
I have come
to this.
what a sardonic riposté
to my past!

I can spin around.
bend back.

I've got everything
but a button to push
for a secretary.

this Lazy Boy swivel has
many uses:

now I'm a tail gunner
in a bomber ...
I swing up, down,
around ...

tat tat tat tat

I'm shooting enemy planes
out of the sky ...

or, look, I'm the boss ...
I've called in some slump-